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FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, INTERMOUNTAIN  
REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE  
INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE, DRUG  
POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES, OF THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT  
REFORM COMMITTEE, AT AN OVERSIGHT HEARING CONCERNING  
“MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARKS AND THE PARKS OF THE  
SOUTHWEST.”**

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Mr. Chairman, welcome to Flagstaff, Arizona, and thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss management and operational issues affecting parks in the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service.

First, on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS), I would like to acknowledge and thank Congress for its continuing support of our parks and programs in the Intermountain Region, as well as the entire National Park System. With me today are Joe Alston, Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park, and, Palma Wilson, Superintendent of Flagstaff Area Monuments. They will be happy to answer any specific questions about their parks and share with you their impressions and results of the core analysis processes conducted in their parks.

The Intermountain Region is the home of the first national monument and first national park, as well as the home of national and international icons such as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon National Parks, and of world-class archeological sites like Mesa Verde National Park and Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The region encompasses eight states and 82 park units across diverse landscapes of arid deserts, high plains, high mountain ranges and red rock canyons. In 2004, the Intermountain Region welcomed close to 39 million annual visitors and generated an estimated \$850 million in economic benefits to surrounding communities. We in the Intermountain Region respect the responsibilities entrusted to us by the American people, and our focus remains fixed on protecting these places for the enjoyment of the present generation and generations yet to come.

It is in that spirit of responsible trust that Director Fran Mainella has implemented the National Park Service Legacy Initiative which encompasses five guiding themes to secure the legacy of America's national parks: management excellence, sustainability, outdoor recreation, conservation, and 21<sup>st</sup> century relevancy. Underlying these themes is the recognition and conviction that the National Park System must be managed with utmost efficiency and innovation, in collaboration with intergovernmental partners and the private sector.

Congress provided nearly \$560 million to operate the Intermountain Region in Fiscal Year (FY) 2005. Of that, \$238.8 million was provided as appropriations for Operation

of the National Park System (ONPS). In addition to park base funding, some of the other funding sources we utilized included \$10.5 million for cyclic maintenance projects, \$15.2 million for repair/rehabilitation projects, \$3.7 million for cultural resources projects, \$2.5 million for natural resources projects, and \$1 million for museum collection management.

To ensure credibility, transparency and accountability, the Intermountain Region has developed a process to help parks determine their core needs, and to help park managers look at their operations to determine if those core needs are being addressed in the most efficient and effective way given each park's budget resources. This process now has been adopted by the NPS as a whole, and is part of the NPS Legacy Initiative to promote management excellence. The core operations process is park-based and park-driven, giving park managers a powerful tool to improve the connection between their financial resources and their core needs.

In this process, a park looks at a projection of its base budget over the next five years, based on past allocations. It then determines what its core needs are based on its enabling legislation and other documents relevant to its purpose and establishment. With those core needs, a park then develops a list of priorities. Once its priorities are set, a park looks at all the activities it performs with its current budget and personnel and then asks: Do these activities match the priorities? Which activities are essential and which may not be? If some activities are not essential, could the resources for those activities be redirected toward essential functions? Or, if the park has a projected budget deficit in its out-years, could non-essential activities be eliminated to help the park operate within its means?

In addition, the core operations process indicates whether a park is able to fulfill its core functions with the resources currently allocated to it. This kind of information and analysis is essential in ensuring the credibility of park budgets, but will also help park managers strategically plan for the future based on a sound understanding of what resources they will have and how they will need to allocate them. To date, 26 parks in the Intermountain Region have adopted the core operations process, and we anticipate all 82 Intermountain Region parks will implement the process by 2009. The National Park Service nationwide has committed to initiating core operation reviews at 50 parks. This is not a one-time exercise, but a change in the way we plan our ongoing efforts. Each year, parks will look at their budget projection and use this tool for strategic planning.

Using this process we have achieved efficiencies by combining positions, encouraging partnerships, using new technology, reducing vehicle fleets, recovering costs, eliminating low-priority activities, and contracting out work that does not need to be performed by federal personnel. Interestingly, in some larger parks, a significant portion of a park's operations are conducted with non-Federal personnel. For example, only 28 percent of the workforce at Mesa Verde is comprised of Federal employees. The remainder of the work is accomplished by concessioners, contractors, cooperators, and other non-Federal sources. By taking these steps toward management excellence, we can maximize the value of the nearly \$560 million we receive from Congress to care for the parks of the

Intermountain Region while also achieving the other thematic goals in the Legacy Initiative.

The Intermountain Region has used approximately 65 percent of its recreation fee funds on deferred maintenance projects, excluding the cost of collecting those funds. Overall, the region spent approximately \$53 million from all fund sources in FY 04 on deferred maintenance projects. These dollars have largely funded improvements to physical assets such as buildings, roads, utilities, and trails. For example, Arches National Park used a 10-member Student Conservation Association crew to repair seven miles of trail. A similar effort was undertaken by a youth group at Chiricahua National Monument in Arizona. In addition, deferred maintenance projects improved disability access to visitor facilities at El Morro National Monument in New Mexico and Wupatki National Monument in Arizona. Additional projects in Arizona included upgrading the Mather Campground at Grand Canyon and repairing historic structures at Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site.

The Legacy Initiative emphasizes conservation of park resources. The Intermountain Region has established a record of providing superior stewardship of resources by applying innovative and conscientious management to secure the most benefits from the dollars we receive from Congress. The Legacy Initiative also pledges support for outdoor recreation, which contributes to the overall health of Americans. Ensuring that parks continue to be prime places for recreational activity requires maintaining park facilities such as trails, roads, campgrounds, visitor centers and other amenities.

For example, the Intermountain Region has made extensive and effective use of Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESUs), which are composed of universities, governmental and non-profit partners that provide the NPS with research, technical assistance, and educational opportunities. The Intermountain Region has used \$300,000 in base funds as “seed money” to attract matching funds. For each \$1 in Intermountain Region funds, we are able to attract more than \$40 from other fund sources. In FY 2005, CESU projects were valued at \$13 million and in FY 04, CESUs provided approximately \$1.8 million in support for cultural resource projects. To enhance CESU capacity to provide support for cultural resource projects, the Intermountain Region has moved three cultural resource experts to the three CESUs that serve the Intermountain Region. Overall, the Intermountain Region spent approximately \$3.7 million on cultural resource activities in FY 2005, down slightly from \$3.8 million in 2004 and \$3.9 million in 2003. Even so, we believe our capacity to protect cultural resources has improved due to our aggressive use of CESUs and our efforts to improve the cultural resource capacities of CESUs.

The Intermountain Region is also proud of the accomplishments of the Vanishing Treasures Program, a program originally designed to address inadequate funding for protection of historic and pre-historic ruins in the region’s national park units. That program has been generously funded by Congress for the last 10 years and has provided more than 60 new cultural resource positions. In FY 2005, the program received \$1.5 million.

Ensuring the long-term relevancy of the National Park System to America's diverse demographics and its young people is another prime objective of the Intermountain Region through the Legacy Initiative. Data on park visitation suggest that visitors to units of the national park system are predominately middle to upper income, and largely Caucasian. To expand the reach of our national parks to a broader segment of the population, the Intermountain Region has pioneered a program called "teacher-to-ranger-to-teacher" that brings public school teachers into our parks to work as rangers. The teachers undergo training comparable to that of other seasonal park rangers and then return to their classrooms with lesson plans developed from their park work experiences. The Intermountain Region has entered into agreements with 11 school districts in Colorado and Texas, focusing specifically on districts that serve underprivileged children. To date, eighteen teacher-rangers have worked approximately 6,000 hours in eight parks at a cost to the National Park Service of \$45,000.

We believe the benefits of this program are significant. As teachers return to the classroom following their park experiences, they bring to their students first-hand knowledge of the important issues facing parks. For many of these students, their teachers may serve as their first or only link to the natural and cultural resources managed by the NPS. We believe relationships like these are essential to ensuring that the national park idea flourishes in the coming decades.

Within the Intermountain Region, the Office of Indian Affairs and American Culture (IAAC) promotes constructive working relationships between national parks and diverse cultural communities. The office assists parks, Tribes, park-affiliated communities, and other Federal and state agencies, by implementing policies and projects that increase mutual cooperation and support the mission of the NPS. The IAAC provides a wide range of technical and professional services to all national parks in the Intermountain Region and also provides support services to all 388 national parks in the nation for the implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. The IAAC comprises several distinct but related programs, including tribal liaison, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act program, ethnography, technical assistance to Long Distance Trails, International Affairs, and other NPS programs to facilitate involvement of communities with historical and contemporary connections to heritage resources.

In recent years the Intermountain Region has become increasingly involved in issues involving our international borders. The Region includes seven units along the United States-Mexico border, which provided outstanding recreational opportunities to more than 3 million visitors in 2004. Impacts from human and vehicular activity associated with increased border activities has caused serious damage to park cultural and natural resources in these border parks. Some of the NPS units in southern Arizona include endangered and sensitive species habitat and wilderness areas, making damage to these scarce resources even more tragic. Yet, effects to the parks are not limited to endangered species or wilderness. At Padre Island National Seashore, for example, visitors have

encountered evidence of drug smuggling along park beaches. This kind of illegal activity affects parks significantly and can impact the quality of the visitor experience.

The Department of Homeland Security is the primary agency responsible for international border security, and DHS has significantly increased its efforts and resources in securing the Southwest border. We are currently working with DHS to establish plans of action for ensuring appropriate border security in parks along the border. For NPS, Congress has provided additional funding in each of the last three years to address the impacts on park resources and visitors, including funding for additional law enforcement positions and a vehicle barrier at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and Coronado National Memorial. To ensure that we continue to meet the core mission of the NPS, park rangers performing law enforcement in the border park areas meet all NPS and Department of the Interior training standards for law enforcement. Additionally, the NPS provides advanced tactical law enforcement training to rangers working in border parks facing high risks from illegal smuggling activities. To further advance the goal of secure borders, health and safety, and resource protection, the NPS works cooperatively with DHS Customs and Border Protection.

In conclusion, we are deeply committed to protecting the places in our care and ensuring quality visitor experiences for present and future generations. We deeply appreciate the support parks have received from Congress and from the American people. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.